

Fall 8-15-1998

ENG 3009C-003: Myth and Culture

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English 3009
Fall, '98

 Miller
3009C-003

"Life is not possible without an opening toward the transcendent; in other words, human beings cannot live in chaos."
from: The Sacred And The Profane, Mircea Eliade

In this course we will develop the the thesis that all human conceptualization comes in and through the symbolic forms that we construct; that among these symbolic forms, myth holds an important place; and that, therefore, the terms "myth" and "untruth" are not synonymous. In fact, this semester we will ask the questions: "To what extent may we regard 'myth' and 'truth' as synonymous? To what extent does our grasp of reality come to us in the form of our myths?"

Reading List

The speed with which we cover these materials will depend upon both the needs and the interests of the students in the class. The due dates of all reading assignments will be announced at least one week before any class discussion or quizzes\tests upon the material. In the case of longer works, more preparation time will be allowed. From time to time additional texts will be made available in the form either of handouts, materials on reserve at the library, or in the lectures.

1. Gilgamesh, pp. 11-44 (Aug.24-31)
2. Genesis, 1-3 pp.45-53; 6-9 pp.53-57; Job, pp.69-86 (Sept.2-Sept.9)
3. Ovid, Metamorphoses, pp. 918-929; "Gravity and the Holy Ghost," Reserve, Booth Library, (Sept.11)
4. Wald, "The Origin of Life," Reserve, Booth Library
Eiseley, "The Coming of the Giant Wasps," Reserve BL (Sept.14-16)
5. Frost, A Masque of Reason, Reserve, BL. (Sept. 18)
6. Homer, The Odyssey, (Sept.21-28)
7. Bagavad Gita excerpt (handout); Plato: Apology and Phaedo, pp.806 - 830. (Sept.30)
8. Machiavelli, The Prince, pp.1702-1717 (Oct. 2)
1st in-class writing exercise (Oct.5)
9. Melville, Billy Budd, pp.734-804 (Oct.7-12)
10. Singer, "Gimpel the Fool," Reserve, BL (Oct.14)
11. Swift, from Gulliver's Travels, pp.231-294 (Oct.16-19)
12. Cervantes: Don Quixote, pp.1819-1947 (Oct.21-28)
13. Voltaire, Candide, pp.334-410 (Oct.30-Nov.4)
2nd in-class writing exercise (Nov.6)
14. "Song of Songs," from The Old Testament and sonnets of Catullus and Petrarch (Nov.9) pp.835-840 & 1676-1679
15. Chaucer, The Miller's Tale, pp.1578 ff. (Nov.11-13)
16. Poems of Eliot and Stevens in Vol. II
17. Flaubert, Bovary, pp.828-1081 (Nov.30-Dec.4)

We will write in class two expository papers on the material covered to that date, and a final examination. The papers will each count as 20% each of your grade. In addition, we will have quizzes on the material on the day the material is due. The quizzes will be objective in nature, and will count for 40% of your grade.

The essays will be graded on the basis of two considerations only: the degree to which they display a close familiarity with the reading and the degree to which they approximate standard English.

No work missed during an unexcused absence may be made up.